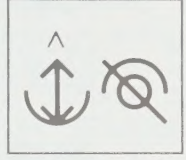


COMMUNICATING TOGETHER



A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE ABOUT AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3

SEPTEMBER 1989



CONTENTS

3 SALUTE TO SHIRLEY

ANN KENNEDY

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

6 Catching up on the Mail

KARI HARRINGTON

7 ESCI Awarded Government Grant

ANN KENNEDY

RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

9 Introducing Our New Column

BARBARA REID

AUGMENTATIVE COMMUNICATION

11 Adult Servicing

TONY DIAMANTI

BLISSYMBOL TALK

12 Blissymbols and Literacy

SHIRLEY McNAUGHTON

THE PARAPHRASE

14

CATHY FAIRLEY

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

15 The Blissymbolics Communication System in Poland

ANNA LECHOWICZ

TEACHING AND LEARNING

17 Blissymbols and the Institution

ALAIN JACOBUS

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

19 Closing the Acquisition Versus Composition Theme

GEB VERBURG

22 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



VOL. 7, NO. 3 SEPTEMBER 1989

Established November 1982

Published quarterly by the Easter Seal Communication Institute, a division of The Easter Seal Society.

Director: Ann Kennedy

Editorial Team: Ann Kennedy,
Naomi Gibson, Barbara Reid,
Nancy McCartney

Subscriptions: Darlene Blachar

Design: Jack Steiner

Typesetting and Printing:

The Beacon Herald, Stratford, Ontario

Cover Picture: Shirley McNaughton receiving the Order of Canada from Governor General Jeanne Sauvé.

Photo: Government House, Ray Kolly.

The contents are copyright

Second Class Mail Registration No. 7093

Communicating Together is published quarterly as a means of sharing the experiences and communication systems of nonspeaking people with their families, communities and the professionals who work with them.

The cover design reflects, directly and indirectly, the many techniques that contribute to augmentative communication: pictures, drawings, signing, Blissymbols, words and technology.

Back Issues: Limited number available, \$5. Canadian funds.

Subscription Rate: \$22. per year Canadian funds, \$19. per year U.S. funds. Subscriptions outside North America \$27. per year Canadian funds. ISAAC Members \$5. discount on each of the above rates.

Direct correspondence regarding subscriptions, back issues, contributions, sponsoring, advertising, address changes and bulk mailings to:

Communicating Together
Easter Seal Communication Institute
250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 200
Don Mills, Ontario, Canada M3C 3P2

Communicating Together is an affiliated publication of the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC).

The Publisher

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) wishes to recognize and thank the Pilot Club International, Ontario District, for its support in sponsoring sections of *Communicating Together*.

ESCI gratefully acknowledges funding by the Kiwanis Club of Toronto to support the typesetting font development. Blissymbols presented herein have been electronically typeset.

ESCI is a member of the Canadian Periodical Publishers Association (CPPA).

Ontario Society for Crippled Children, income tax donation registration No. 0003285-11.

SALUTE TO SHIRLEY

ANN KENNEDY

Ann Kennedy is Director of the Easter Seal Communication Institute and Editor of Communicating Together. She has worked with Shirley McNaughton since 1968, first as a classroom volunteer at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre (now Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre) and then in a variety of capacities within ESCI and Blissymbolics Communication International.

April through June of this year were exciting and emotional months for all of us at the Easter Seal Communication Institute and particularly for Shirley McNaughton, our founder, mentor and former executive director. It was a time to honour a woman of exceptional abilities and vision at two special events.

The first was Shirley's investiture into the Order of Canada. Although the announcement had been made in January, the formal ceremony was held in Ottawa on April 12th at Rideau Hall, home of the Governor General of Canada. Shirley reported that it was indeed a regal and glittering affair, attended by all the lieutenant-governors of the provinces of Canada and honouring over sixty persons. One by one each recipient stood before Madame Sauvé, the Governor General, as a citation was read outlining his or her achievements. Madame Sauvé presented the award, and spoke personally to each person. Shirley was very touched when she said to her, "And there are those who do for others what they are unable to do for themselves." The ceremony was followed by an elegant reception and buffet dinner, where recipients and their guests had a chance to mingle and discuss each other's areas of accomplishment.

Reception in Toronto

Back in Toronto, ESCI, too, planned a reception to honour Shirley. On May 17th, over 150 people gathered in the Easter Seal Board Room to celebrate with her. It was an informal affair, with lots of opportunity for old friends and staff to visit

with Shirley, her family, and each other. A book of greetings was on display with messages and good wishes from all parts of the world. Several people who had worked with Shirley shared their memories and impressions: George Wilson, BCI Chairman, 1975-1988, reminisced about the many interactions with Charles K. Bliss, the challenges of the early years, and of relating to this creative genius; Lang Moffat, current BCI Chairman, remembered how his interest in serving as a marketing volunteer rapidly escalated into taking on extensive board responsibilities, largely through Shirley's influence and enthusiasm. Peter Ely, Executive Director, The Easter Seal Society, commented on the vitality and excitement he always found in the organization that Shirley had nurtured. The most memorable comments, however, came from Kari Harrington using her Epson with RealVoice. She had consulted with other augmentative communicators and prepared her speech in advance. This presentation aptly demonstrated what Shirley has strived for since she began in the field eighteen years ago — namely, to have augmentative communicators "speak for themselves" and to live as full and independent lives as possible.

The international influence that has always stimulated and strengthened Shirley to carry on her work in the broader field of ACC was present as well. A videotape, prepared in Belgium in March was shown at the reception. Through it, greetings were sent from colleagues in twelve different countries.

To recognize both her forthcoming retirement and well earned membership in the Order of Canada, ESCI has set up "The Shirley McNaughton Scholarship Fund", as a lasting tribute to her dedication and leadership to the field of augmentative communication. The fund will be used to assist augmentative communicators participate in professional conferences. (See announcement p.21) We were overwhelmed with the generous response from her many colleagues and friends. By the time of the reception the fund had passed the \$10,000 mark. It has now surpassed \$12,000.

Looking Back

Shirley has worked with enthusiasm and determination in the field of augmentative communication for almost two decades. Her interest in and devotion to her nonspeaking students is well known. Over the



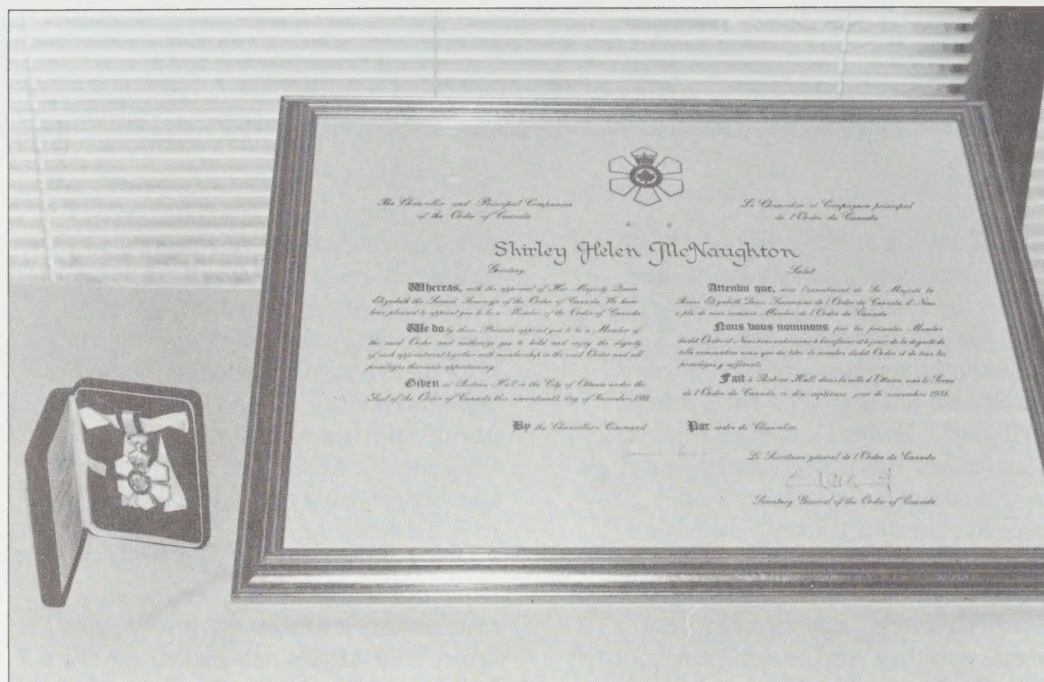
George Wilson speaking at the May reception while Ann Kennedy and Shirley McNaughton (temporarily wheelchair bound) listen.

years her work has been recognized and honoured by many groups and organizations. But this attention, though appreciated, was not what drove her on. Through all the years she strove to find ways to create richer life opportunities for non-speaking persons. She has always given more than just her professional skills in this effort; she has given herself. As Shirley said to me, "After all, they're my friends!"

At the foundation of all her work in the field of augmentative and alternative communication over the last eighteen years has been Blissymbolics. Shirley describes it as "my beginning, my nourishment, my understanding". This communication system draws to it many special people — those who are sensitive to the potential of nonspeaking people and who are prepared to invest time and effort in learning and teaching the system. Anyone who has associated with BCI affiliates will identify with the sense of comradeship and belonging that comes from this network of energetic and dedicated professionals. It is a warm and supportive family.

Many participants attending the European Affiliate Meeting in Belgium this past spring commented on this and likened Shirley to the mother of a large family, with children spread out around the world, yet united by a belief in, and an understanding of the power of Blissymbolics. Those of us who have had the good fortune to attend a European meeting have learned much from our colleagues there and cherish the friendship and camaraderie that is present on these occasions.

I asked Shirley to describe the most significant event in her eighteen year career in the field. She responded quickly, "the formation of ISAAC". To her, this marked the true recognition of augmentative communication as a field of its own, bringing together consumers and professionals from many disciplines and geographic areas. Shirley believed in ISAAC and was determined to make it work. Along with many other dedicated people, Shirley, as the first president of ISAAC, devoted endless time and energy developing an organization with a sound foundation on which to build. The ISAAC biennial conference in Anaheim last fall, with



Shirley's medal and certificate.

over six hundred delegates present from around the world, was a testament to the fact that the organization had come of age. Shirley's involvement now relates to committee work, chairing the Translations Committee and serving on the Membership and Bylaws committees. She is enjoying her more relaxed role.

Supporting Shirley throughout her career has been her husband Bob. Not only has he encouraged her, he has worked and travelled along with her wherever the conferences took them. In fact, since his own retirement a few years ago, he has been the most active volunteer at ESCI, pitching in whenever needed. Both Bob and Shirley have great pride in their two sons, both of whom have begun their careers in the rehabilitation field. Kevin is an orthotist, specializing in seating, at Erin Oak Treatment Centre in Mississauga, and David until August of this year has been a consultant at the Augmentative Communication Service (ACS), Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre in Toronto. He intends to begin work this fall in a Masters program focussing on adult literacy.

Not a Retirement but a Beginning

Anyone knowing Shirley will recognize that hers will not be a typical retirement. No rocking chair, knitting and gardening for

her! Now that she is free of administrative responsibilities, she has many plans.

She will continue to be involved with ESCI, serving on the Easter Seal Society Communication Advisory Committee, and working when needed, as a consultant to the ESCI Educational Service Program. "Retirement" will also give her time to return to her roots of Blissymbolics, where she will serve as a member of the Blissymbolics Communication International Board of Directors, responsible for Blissymbol applications. This role provides the opportunity for involvement in several projects under development or being planned. Three are already underway:

1. Blissymbol Component — Minspeak — Words Strategy (for the Touch Talker) which applies the logic and semantic capabilities of Blissymbolics to Minspeak and Words Strategy.
2. StoryBliss, (using Hypercard on the Macintosh computer) which provides a means for Blissymbol users to read stories in both Blissymbols and print. It also provides a means for the student to determine the balance desired between the two orthographies in any given message.
3. BlissTel, (using both IBM and Macintosh computers) providing computer networking in Blissymbols using telephone lines.

Shirley looks forward to having "leisure" time for studying, think-

ing, lecturing, writing, and consulting. High on her list of planned activities are community presentations with the augmentative communicators she taught and worked with since 1971 and sharing new learning with them as they continue to expand their communication capabilities.

While the list of planned activities outlined here seems formidable to most, it is not a strange retirement at all for one who, at her May reception described her "work" as "totally integrating her belief system" and providing her with the opportunity of doing what she wanted to do, "teach and contribute to the lives of others".

Happy Retirement, Shirley! □

About the Publisher

The Easter Seal Communication Institute, ESCI, (formerly the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, established in 1975, has worked since its inception toward enhancing the lives of nonspeaking people. In its early years the Institute's primary focus was the development and application of Blissymbolics as an augmentative communication system around the world. This role continues through Blissymbolics Communication International, a division of ESCI, but within a broader mandate that reflects the philosophy and perspective of its professional staff.

ESCI supports effective communication by nonspeaking people through:

- (1) Contributing to the field of augmentative and alternative communication in a manner that promotes cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (2) Implementing services to improve the quality of instruction for augmentative communicators toward the development of cognitive, social and emotional growth.
- (3) Educating, informing and increasing the awareness of those who are in a position to make positive life changes for nonspeaking people.
- (4) Incorporating Blissymbolics Communication International within ESCI, to maintain support for the system of Blissymbolics, considering it to be a valuable means to advance augmentative communication that contributes to development and growth.
- (5) Making augmentative communication materials and publications readily available to those who require them.

Introducing Naomi Gibson



The Easter Seal Communication Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of Naomi Gibson as Director of the Educational Service Program. Ms. Gibson joins us from the Computers in Education Centre of the Ontario Ministry of Education where she has been an Education Officer. Ms. Gibson brings a wide range of experience in education for exceptional children. She began her career as a classroom teacher with the North York Board of Education, and taught in special education classes for ten years. From 1982-1989, she served as a Program Modification Facilitator. She served for two years as Principal and Course Director in the North York Board of Education Summer School Program in English as a Second Language.

Ms. Gibson is presently completing a Master of Education in Special Education and has focussed on the topic of Augmentative Communication.

The ESCI Educational Service Program, operating within a collaborative-consultative model, supports educators and augmentative communicators in Ontario within their school setting. Ms. Gibson will work with the team of ESCI consultants and instructors providing direct service throughout the province, and in planning and implementing service related activities such as seminars, presentations and research. In her role as Director of the Educational Service Program,

Ms. Gibson will work closely with other agencies and committees promoting and advocating for the education of augmentative communicators.

We wish her well in her new position with us. □

ISAAC Call for Papers

The program committee for the 1990 ISAAC Biennial Conference announces the Call for Papers for the 1990 Conference. Those wishing to submit proposals for traditional platform presentations, miniseminars, round table discussions, poster sessions, or videotape presentations should submit their proposed contributions on or before October 1, 1989. Authors will be notified by January 1990 of acceptance or rejection of the proposal.

The 1990 Biennial Conference will offer a variety of session formats for individuals wishing to submit proposals for presentation. The program Committee will be guided in the selection of proposals by the criteria of quality, content area, broad-based conference attendee participation, and program balance. Only unpublished papers may be presented.

Submission of a proposal is a commitment to be registered and attend the conference. Only proposals received by October 1, 1989 will be considered. Proposals which are incomplete or do not follow the format prescribed in the guidelines will be returned to the author.

Deadline date for submission is October 1, 1989

Proposals should be mailed to:
Department of Speech
Communication
KTH, Box 70014
10044 Stockholm
Sweden

For complete information and guidelines for submitting proposals contact:

ISAAC
P.O. Box 1762
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M4G 4A3

Catching Up on the Mail

KARI HARRINGTON



Kari Harrington was in the original Blissymbol class of 1971 at the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. Since then, she has completed elementary school at James Robinson Public School in Markham, Ontario, and more recently, high school at Langstaff Secondary School in Richmond Hill. She is attending a life skills class at Markham Participation House, and hopes to move there soon.

In my column this issue, I have really exciting news from Andrew Murphy. I'm sure you remember the wonderful wilderness adventures that he wrote about in our magazine. Well now, he is starting out on an even bigger adventure. He's going to college! He sent along this letter telling us all about it and I am going to include it here.

Andrew's News

Dear Friends,
How are you? I am fine. This is a really big year for me. I turned twenty-one, I wrote my S.A.T.'s and got 900, and I have been accepted at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania. I graduated from Countryside High in Florida on June 8th. I am also getting a communication device that will sit on my tray. It has a Real Voice and will interface with a head switch. This device will help me talk with many more people.

I am very excited about going away to college, but I am afraid also. It will be very different for me. Edinboro has 6,000 students and 250 are disabled. There is one person like me who does not talk. There is a six-week summer program for the disabled students. It is to help them adjust to college life.

I have to plan my day so I know when to order the van to bring me to class. I have to request a meal aide for when I choose to eat, I have to book my showers with the personal care attendants and request academic aides to help me with my homework. I also have to make time for having fun.

Bye for now.

Andrew

We all think you are wonderful, Andrew, and wish you Good Luck! Write and let us know how things go.

Another Adventure

Speaking of adventures, Justin Clark, who lives in Ottawa, Ontario, wrote a terrific story about a holiday he took with seven other people. I'm not sure how many were in wheelchairs but I think at least two. Justin's story is almost like a diary of what happened every day. They all travelled in one van, right across Canada to Vancouver Island. The things they saw, the things they did and the places they stayed, were all so interesting, I wish we had room to print his whole story.

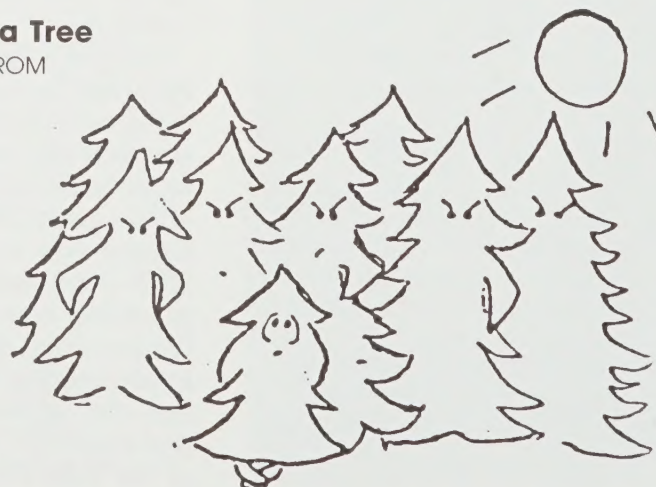
Two other people have written to me recently. One of them, Douglas Braswell from New York City, is 46 years old, married and has a job working with a computer. He's able to walk, but uses a communication board. He included a copy of it. It's a combination word and sentence board and he thinks it works really well, especially since he's the only one on his job that does not talk. Douglas is really lucky to have found his place in the world and he is an inspiration to us all.

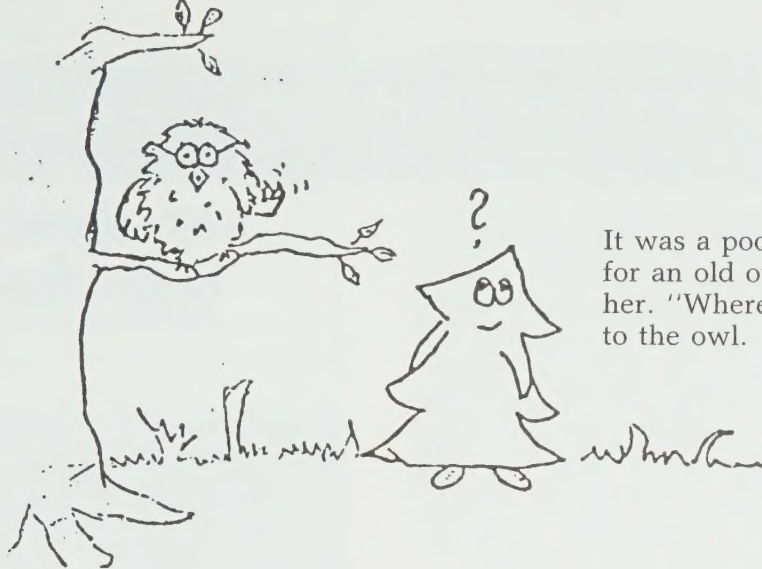
The other letter was from Ancki Stenstrom in Finland. She translated two of my poems into Swedish. (Many people in Finland speak Swedish.) It's exciting to see something you've written in a different language! She also sent me a tale she had written about a little blue spruce tree. The story and pictures are so special I wanted to share them with you, too.

A Tale about a Tree

ANCKI STENSTROM

Once upon a time there was a tree which couldn't become like the other trees in the forest. There was something very special with this tree, because it was blue. All the other trees in the forest were green. It was so strange — it was blue because it couldn't talk.





It was a poor little blue spruce which had no friends except for an old owl. The owl made a sign for the spruce to follow her. "Where to?" wondered the spruce but she said nothing to the owl.

They walked over hills and vales until they got to a little stream which they had to jump over. When they had walked a bit farther, the spruce saw to her delight that all the other trees were blue too. "Here I want to remain forever" the spruce thought and started immediately to gesture to the other spruces in the blue forest.



Editor's Note:

Kari always likes getting letters. Write to: Kari Harrington, 16 Jonquil Crescent, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3P 1T4.

This section of *Communicating Together* is sponsored by Pilot Club International, Ontario District.



ESCI Awarded Government Grant

ANN KENNEDY

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) was delighted to receive word this spring that it had been granted funding to carry on the work of our nonspeaking presentors. Last fall, we submitted a proposal to the Community Action Fund of the Ontario Government's Office of the Disabled, to permit the continuation of the program begun two years ago. It was a great honour to have Murad Velshi, MPP for Don Mills and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, visit our Resource Room on

June 7th to present a cheque for the first year of the project to John Dowling who represented ESCI. Mr. Velshi's visit gave us the opportunity to explain in more detail the project we had in mind and what we had accomplished up to now.

Those of you who are past subscribers may recall the feature story in *Communicating Together* Vol. 6, No. 2, June 1988, in which we told about the beginnings of the project. In 1986, ESCI received donations in memory of Susan Wilson, the late wife of the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The family asked that the funds be directed toward a project relating to augmentative communicators. These parameters enabled Shirley McNaughton to bring to life an idea that had been

forming in her mind for some time — to have nonspeaking people tell their own stories to the community and inform the public about augmentative communication.

Thus began the training of John Dowling, Sue Odell, Kari Harrington and Ann Running, all people Shirley had taught or worked with in the seventies. In March 1987, the Susan Wilson Community Information Service was launched, and training sessions began for the four young people. They met once a week and had sessions on preparing presentations, problem solving during presentations, and using visual and audio-visual equipment. Several guest lecturers spoke to them, giving tips on how to give successful presentations.

It was during this time too, that plans were developed for a videotape to be made which could be used within their presentations. "Speaking for Our Selves" is a ten minute film written by and starring the four young adults.

With their training behind them and the film in hand, the four young people were ready, in the fall of 1987, to begin their community awareness presentations. Over the last two years they have been invited to speak throughout the province to school children, service clubs and professional groups, and requests for presentations keep coming. In 1988 alone, they presented at such places as York University, Variety Village, Easter Seal Parent Delegate conference, and to various school boards and schools. A major undertaking last year was the trip all four presentors made to the ISAAC meeting in Anaheim, California, where they took part in several sessions.

The Need for More Funding

The funds from the original donation were depleted by the fall of 1988. We reached the point of requiring the host organizations to assume the costs involved in undertaking a presentation. Out-of-town commitments could be extremely expensive by the time transportation, attendant care, and lodging costs were added up. We realized special funding was needed if the project was to continue.

The proposal accepted by the Community Action Fund was based

on the premise that the presentors, working in pairs, will each do one presentation per month. Salaries will be paid to them and to an aide/facilitator who will accompany them. Planning sessions and tutoring, provided by ESCI consultants, are included in the project as well.

One of the major expenses incurred in any of the expeditions is for transportation. If visits are within Metropolitan Toronto, Wheel-Trans, the public transportation system for the disabled, can be used. For trips farther afield, however, we must rely on the private "taxi" services which have vans able to accommodate electric wheelchairs.

The experience of the past two years has shown that a tremendous amount of time must be spent coordinating all the arrangements to ensure a successful presentation. Is the building wheelchair accessible? Are the washrooms accessible? Does the host have the audio-visual equipment necessary, or must we take our own? Even arranging appropriate transportation can take endless hours on the telephone. To provide this administrative support, June Wiancko will spend two days a week as project coordinator.

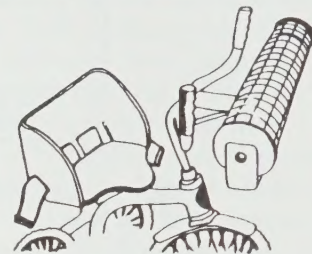
We are extremely grateful to the government for making it possible for the nonspeaking presentors to carry on with their work. We look forward to helping the community become aware of the capabilities of people like Kari, Sue, John and Ann. And no one can do that better than the augmentative communicators themselves. □



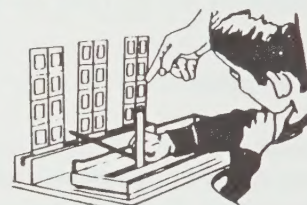
MPP Murad Velshi presents a cheque to John Dowling watched by Ann Kennedy, ESCI and Peter Ely, Executive Director, Easter Seal Society.

Adaptations for use with non-speaking individuals

Ideas
for :



- portable communication boards
- adapted laptrays
- head and manual pointers
- encoding systems and more ...



... shared by therapists and teachers from 40 centres (Canada, United States, Sweden...), and gathered in one book.



EVERYBODY'S TECHNOLOGY :

A Sharing of Ideas In Augmentative Communication

by Christiane Charlebois-Marais, B.Sc. O.T.

- Soft cover, 188 pages, 153 illustrations.
- A complete chapter is devoted to readiness skills and adaptive play.

TO ORDER, SEND :

(from Canada)	\$19.50 Cdn
(from United States)	\$16.00 US
(from Overseas)	\$17.00 US
	or \$22.00 US
	for airmail

- Postage and handling included —
- or a purchase order to :

CHARLECOMS

P.O. Box 419
Jean-Talon Station
Montreal, Quebec,
Canada, H1S 2Z3

Promoting Spontaneous Communication

BARBARA REID



Barbara Reid is a consultant with the Easter Seal Communication Institute. She has been involved in the field of augmentative communication since 1976, first in England and then in Canada. She has worked in research and training as well as consulting, and has co-authored two books and several articles on augmentative communication.

Introducing our new column

How long does it take for a 'research finding' to affect more than the few people involved in producing it? There is no single answer, of course, but the paths between research and practice are not simple and direct. Often the suggestions for practice come after a series of studies has explored several aspects of a particular problem. Sometimes, the 'need for further research' is the most we can learn from a particular project. But by and large, research in augmentative communication is undertaken in the hope that the results will benefit augmentative communicators, in the short or long term. Work in this field is now published in a variety of academic journals, and presented at a number of different conferences. Practitioners' sampling of these journals and conferences is often hit

and miss, because of time and budget constraints. In this column, we would like to provide another link between research and practice by reviewing an article or book which may be of interest to our readers.

We will start this new column with a problem faced by most practitioners and an article rich in information and suggestions. This problem is how to get students or clients to use their augmentative systems for everyday, spontaneous communication. The article, by Stephen Calculator, is called "Promoting the acquisition and generalization of conversational skills by individuals with severe disabilities". This article provides a summary of research in this area, and is presented in a special volume of *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* devoted to the 'state of the art and science' of AAC. While the article focuses on people with severe disabilities (in most examples, this includes a cognitive disability), the suggestions could be applied to other populations of AAC users.

What is the problem?

We can teach people, even those with very severe handicaps, what various signs or symbols stand for, and how to make the signs or point to the symbols. But often this new knowledge makes little difference in their lives. Students leave the language teacher's room and carry on in their classrooms as though they had never learned signs for the activities offered to them. Adult clients leave their therapy session and return to a residence where they sit alone, their communication board neglected until the next therapy session.

Approaches to solving the problem

1. Generalizing across settings.

We have known for some time that, for people with severe cognitive disabilities, the best setting for teaching is the one in which we expect the skills to be used (e.g., Brown et al, 1976, Falvey et al, 1988). That is, housekeeping skills are best taught

at home, or in a homelike setting, reasoning skills in the classroom, or shopping skills in a supermarket. Similarly, communication skills for use in the classroom should be taught there, by the people with whom the child will be expected to interact. Where this is not possible or practical, 'simulated instruction' can set up the environment, the stimulus material or the procedures used in a contrived setting to be as similar as possible to the natural setting (Nietupski et al, 1986). For example, a child may have learned several items of vocabulary which relate to body parts and illnesses, but still not use this knowledge to convey important information to the school nurse or doctor. If the teaching situation goes beyond vocabulary to include likely questions from the nurse, role play which depicts a visit to the doctor, and props which make the role play look more realistic, the child will have more cues to help him recognize the real situation as a time to use the vocabulary he has learned.

2. Generalizing across functions.

While we may keep track of the vocabulary items which a client might acquire, we rarely take the same care to record the functions of communication which the client associates with each item. Two recent studies (Glennen and Calculator (1985) and Reichle and Yoder (1985)) suggest that some individuals may not be able to generalize from the function in which they were taught to the function which they are expected to use. For example, we may know that a child can make the signs for drink, cookie and chips, but not realize that she can only use those signs to label the objects. Requesting those same objects is a skill the child has not acquired, and it must be included as a separate teaching step.

3. Instructing the listeners. If we ignore some behaviour that a client is producing, chances are that behaviour will stop, or extinguish. We make use of this principle in a constructive way when we ignore hitting or crying or other disruptive

behaviour. But from the client's point of view, this is just what happens to a lot of communicative behaviour (e.g. Calculator and Dollaghan, 1982). If a child's new signs are ignored at home by parents who do not understand them, signing at home will probably diminish. If an adult client cannot get anyone to stop long enough to watch him point to the symbols for 'hello' and 'how are you', then his use of the board for initiating conversations is likely to decrease. Often, in this situation, clients fall back on a previously successful method for getting someone's attention, such as gestures, smiles and grimaces. This problem can be addressed by instructing staff or parents to be aware of all of the communication modes the client is liable to use. Calculator (1988) has developed a "Communication Repertoire Summary" to aid in the training of communication partners. He interviews a variety of people about the client's method of interacting with them in specific settings. Information is summarized for each setting, and includes the client's modes of communication, a sample of messages, and the communication partners' likely responses. This information is used to help other communication partners have more effective conversations with the client.

4. Focus on communication or language? The final approach might apply equally to school or therapy settings. It involves changing the focus of instruction from language acquisition to functional communication. For example, a student whose language program involves production of syntactically complete utterances may be asked to produce these in spontaneous conversation. The responses which are appropriate for 'schoolwork' may be inappropriate for conversation, where a student will be motivated to communicate if he can indicate 'movies', but find the process cumbersome if his listener insists that he indicate 'I went to the movies last night'.

On a different level, we have Calculator's example of a young child who had been on a labelling program for two years without reaching the criterion set for successful learning. Two objects would be presented to the child, and he

was required to eye point to the one named by the teacher. His failure to point to the named object reliably was seen as a failure to learn to communicate. When the program was changed to one where the child was presented with real choices involving what he ate, where he would sleep or whom he wanted to talk to, he was able to accomplish seven different communication goals within six months.

Editor's Note:

There are several more suggestions for enhancing generalization in the article by Calculator, along with a number of references to other authors who have studied this problem. Readers are referred to these for more details of the points summarized in this column. We hope this type of summary will be useful for *Communicating Together* readers, and welcome your suggestions for further topics or issues.

References

- Brown, L., Nietupski, J., & Hamre-Nietupski, S. (1976). Criterion of ultimate functioning. In M. Thomas (Ed.) *Hey, don't forget about me! Education's investment in the severely, profoundly, and multiply handicapped* (pp. 2-17). Reston, VA: Division of Mental Retardation, The Council for Exceptional Children.
- Calculator, S. (1988). Teaching functional communication skills to adults with mental retardation. In S. Calculator and J. Bedrosian (Eds.), *Communication assessment and intervention for adults with mental retardation* (pp. 309-338). San Diego: College-Hill.
- Calculator, S. & Dollaghan, C. (1982). The use of communication boards in a residential setting. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders* 14, 281-287.
- Falvey, M., Bishop, K., Grenot-Scheyer, M. & Coots, J. (1988). Issues and trends in mental retardation. In S. Calculator and J. Bedrosian (Eds.) *Communication assessment and intervention for adults with mental retardation* (pp. 45-66) San Diego: College-Hill.
- Glennen, S., & Calculator, S. (1985). Training functional communication board use: A pragmatic approach. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* 1, 134-142.

- Nietupski, J., Scheutz, G., & Ockwood, L. (1980). The delivery of communication therapy services to severely handicapped students: A plan for change. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps* 5, 13-23.
- Reichle, J., & Yoder, D. (1985). Communication board use in severely handicapped learners. *Language, Speech and Hearing Services in Schools*, 16, 146-157.

All cited in:

- Calculator, S. (1988). Promoting the acquisition and generalization of conversational skills by individuals with severe disabilities. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 4, 94-103.

Join ISAAC Now

The International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC) offers four types of memberships:

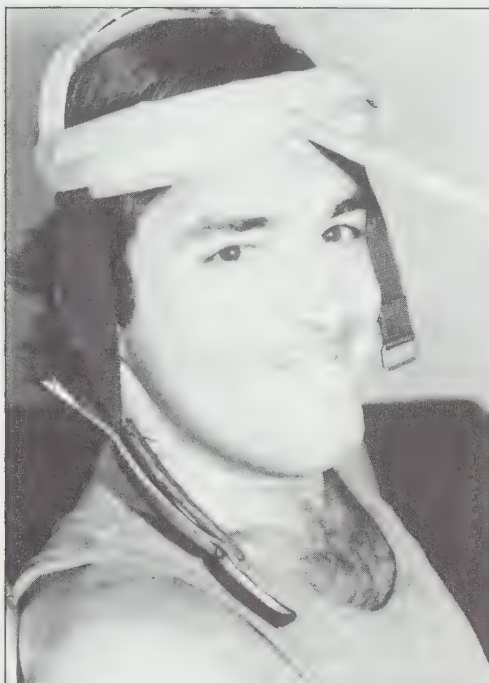
- Student Membership
- Active Membership
- Contributing Membership
- Corporate Membership

Members of ISAAC are entitled to reduced rates for: *Communicating Together*, *Communication Outlook*, *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* (AAC journal)

For membership application and other information about ISAAC write ISAAC, P.O. Box 1762, Station R, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4G 4A3.

Adolescent Servicing

TONY DIAMANTI



Tony Diamanti is a young man who communicates with a letter board. At home, he often uses a computer accessed with a headstick to type his messages. Mr. Diamanti has worked full-time for two and a half years as a data processor for the Ontario Ministry of Human Resources. He also serves on a subcommittee of the Ontario Ministry of Health Assistive Devices Program and is involved in the Communication Action Awareness group. Mr. Diamanti has some interesting ideas on how augmentative communicators can be best served by professionals and shares them with us.

I would like to express my opinion on the assessments done in clinics and hospitals for the teenager or young adult. It's my feeling that holding assessments in hospitals or clinics is totally unnecessary, and that these assessments would be more properly performed in colleges or universities.

Clients are made to feel "ill at health" simply because they're in need of a communication system or a prosthesis. The more experimental and learning environment found in a college or university would, in my opinion, help the client have a better understanding and concept of what he or she really needs to

achieve educational, vocational and recreational goals. There also needs to be a greater awareness of what is available in the technical field. I feel research can be done more effectively in various colleges and universities.

Disabled people are not sick people. An assistive device is not a medical need. It is a tool to enable clients to enhance their own lives.

Consider the Whole Person

I feel, when assessing clients, professionals should consider the client's educational and vocational goals, not just his or her communication needs. The client should be seen as a whole person. Presently if a vocational assessment is done, only the person's vocational needs are considered and funded; if a communication assessment is done, only the person's communication needs are considered. In reality, the person needs to be productive, to learn, to communicate and to play, and all these needs and basic rights should be taken into account and considered together. In order to achieve this, there must be cooperation among funding agencies,

government ministries and rehabilitation clinics. There has to be a coalition between the two major funding sources; Vocational Rehab Services of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and Assistive Devices Branch of the Ministry of Health. The assistive device a person receives is often dictated by the funding mandate rather than the true needs of the individual. There should be more flexibility in the funding mandate to give an individual the proper equipment. Although this may mean longer assessments initially, cooperation will result in more thorough assessments, saving money and time in the long run.

In conclusion, the adolescent or young adult client would benefit greatly in all aspects, leading to a more independent and productive life. □

From the leading edge of the nonspeech communication movement

AAC: AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION

*The Official Journal of the
International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication*

Editor: **Lyle L. Lloyd, PhD**, Professor of Special Education, Professor of Audiology and Speech Sciences, Purdue University

International in scope and transdisciplinary in approach, AAC presents **articles** demonstrating practical applications for your work, **case studies** with direct implications on program development, assessment, and intervention, **position** and **research papers**, **conference abstracts**, and much more. You'll get **concrete, practical applications** in a journal that stimulates development and improves service delivery in nonspeech communication. **ORDER YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TODAY.**

Quarterly / \$48/year personal / \$75/year institutional
(add \$10/year to subscriptions outside U.S.)

Call **FREE** to order **1-800-638-6423** from anywhere in the U.S. except Alaska. In Maryland, call **COLLECT 528-4105**. Or send check or purchase order in U.S. dollars only to the publisher:

Williams & Wilkins

P.O. Box 23291
Baltimore, MD 21203 USA

266 Fulham Road
London SW10 9EL England

AACOMM 50864 88

Blissymbols and Literacy

SHIRLEY McNAUGHTON

In the first two Blissymbol Talks of 1989, we have examined the cognitive learning that can accompany communication with Blissymbolics. In moving our focus to Blissymbols and literacy, it will be evident that the step from talking with Bliss', to reading with Bliss', is but a small one.

If we watch speaking preschoolers sharing stories with their parents, we see a growing awareness of the meanings to be derived from print, an interest in words and an involvement in story content, all being intertwined with talk, with learning about new things and with exploring different ideas. For the child who lacks functional speech and who is learning Blissymbols for communicating, literacy learning can have many of the same features. However, this child will be unable to play with sounds or enjoy the experience of oral reading. For the Blissymbol user, there is a unique compensation. Literacy becomes a new dimension of the familiar process of extracting meaning from symbols.

In selecting and having one's Blissymbols recorded, the child is involved in reading and writing experiences that differ from the reading and writing of print in two major ways: the type of graphic

being used, and the oral activities in which the child can engage. When young speaking children examine words — asking questions, playing with sounds and looking for similarities and differences — they are laying the groundwork for the discovery of rules and for problem solving, all relating to letter sounds and shapes. The print skills they acquire allow young readers to unlock new words, move to increasing levels of difficulty in their reading materials, and develop interests in new topics. Young Bliss' users lack extensive experience in producing sounds and words, but they have a head start in a different aspect of literacy. They are reading as they "talk" with symbols and they are seeing the value of writing every time their message is recorded.

With Blissymbols, in some ways the task is easier, for there is no letter-sound association to learn. All that is needed is an understanding of the semantic link between the symbol and whatever it represents. So reading begins with "talking" and writing begins with the facilitator transcribing symbols that are identical to those used for communication.

It is easy to see why it is important that the teacher explain the component parts of symbols to the student. Understanding the symbol parts gives the Bliss' user the power of generating new symbol meanings. Vocabulary can grow. And all the time the students are "reading" and "writing".

But Bliss' does much more than provide an optional graphic for reading and writing and an alternative to oral experiences. The meaning base of every symbol provides the learner with a mini definition of what the symbol represents. The learning related to concept development offered by Blissymbols provides a critical component in the process of learning to read. The young reader must bring his own knowledge to the page of print. This knowledge base grows as children actively communicate and interacting in their worlds. The extent and richness of their knowl-

edge is contingent upon the experiences open to each child. How strong a role their symbol system plays! How directly linked their reading is to their communication when the symbol meaning is learned through examining its parts! How the knowledge of each symbol's meaning enhances the child's ability to read Bliss' stories!

Supporting the Transition from Blissymbols to Traditional Orthography

But of course, the primary literacy goal is the reading and writing of traditional orthography. So, how does the teacher support the transition from reading and writing of Blissymbols to the reading and writing of print? Here's where some of the strategies and the processes used in Blissymbol communication take on new importance. Bliss' communicators are familiar with the use of initial consonants, thinking about tenses and plurals, attending to visual details, watching the order in which symbols are sequenced. They have been "reading" ever since they began "talking" with Blissymbols. If they have been supported by a good teaching program, problem solving will always have been given prime attention. Now, as the child moves to traditional orthography, the type of skills used and the problem-solving approach remain the same, providing a comfortable knowledge base from which to begin the reading of print.

Let's look at an example of Bliss' communication that evolves almost imperceptibly into a literacy experience, within an integrated classroom setting. A group of kindergarten children are planning an excursion to the firehall. Each child tells the teacher what he or she hopes to see at the fire station and on a large experience chart, the teacher writes down their ideas. When it becomes the turn of the Blissymbol user, the actual symbols to which he points are placed on the chart. He may have had to create combined symbols for the hose | ~ h

Blissymbols used herein are derived from the symbols described in the work *Semantography*, original copyright © C.K. Bliss, 1949.

September 1982, C.K. Bliss granted an exclusive, non-cancellable and perpetual, worldwide license to the Blissymbolics Communication Institute, to provide standards for the application of Blissymbols, for use by handicapped persons and persons having communication, language and learning difficulties. In 1987, the Institute was renamed Blissymbolics Communication International.

siren  and

fire station , if they did not appear on his display. The symbols provide a learning opportunity for all the children as the teacher draws attention to the *h* and *s* sounds, the *ear*  symbol hiding in the *loud*  symbol, the *thing indicator*  in *linear thing*  that's the same shape but different size from the *thing*  symbol in *siren* and the way in which

water  and *fire*  have the same shape but are oriented differently. The ways in which the three concepts have been expressed in Blissymbols can be discussed, and ways to improve or clarify the meaning can be suggested. Everyone can benefit from this activity as various ways of describing things are considered and ideas are refined. The child using Blissymbols can then be asked to choose those symbols he would like to have transposed into words and all the children can watch sound referenced letters being substituted for the meaning referenced Blissymbols. The user of Bliss', although often deprived of the many exper-

iences of early childhood and the learning acquired by talking and exploring, can feel confident and included, as familiar, well-known symbols appear side-by-side with the words of his peers.

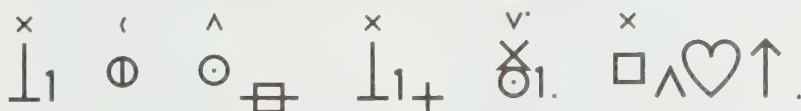
As the Blissymbol user becomes more and more familiar with letters and words, the balance between Blissymbols and print can shift toward a higher proportion of words. The child's capabilities and the careful observation of the teacher determine the timing and rate of the transition and the areas in which change is desirable. The child may choose traditional orthography for both face-to-face communication and for reading and writing; he may choose a heavy reliance on Blissymbols for communication, while moving to print for reading and writing; or he may choose to remain with Blissymbols for another period of time for communicating, reading and writing.

Throughout their early learning programs, children's fluent and effective communication and their confidence and interest within the literacy program need to be the primary determining factors. Blissymbolics offers a rich medium for this to be accomplished. □

New Applications

With new software capabilities becoming available soon through applications utilizing the Blissymbol font developed by Dr. Peter Reich, some interesting opportunities lie ahead. One software program, StoryBliss, soon to be distributed by ESCI, will allow teachers to translate children's stories into Blissymbols using Macintosh computers. Will they provide Blissymbol labels, one per page? Will they paraphrase the text, describing the illustrations and content in general terms? Will they use concept-based, Blissymbol syntax? Will they translate sentences, word for word, into symbols? Or will they select a few symbols as support to the readers' comprehension? There will be many interesting discussions as teachers try different approaches.

Word for Word Translation



We will find our favourite toys.

Symbols as Background Reference Support to the Reading of Words



The child sits at the table and plays with the pail and shovel.

Blissymbolics Communication International Distributors

Canada

Easter Seal Communication Institute
250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 200
Don Mills, Ontario
M3C 3P2

In Québec, Canada

(French Materials only)
Association de Paralysie Cérébrale du Québec Inc.
Centre de Ressources Bliss
525, boul. Hamel est, Suite A-50
Québec G1M 2S8

United States

EBSCO Curriculum Materials
Box 1943
Birmingham, Alabama 35202
U.S.A.

Australia

Kathryn Barrett
The Spastics Centre
of New South Wales
5 Aquatic Drive
Allambie Heights, NSW 2100
Australia

Netherlands

Bliss-symbolen
Communicatiecentrum
Revalidatiecentrum
"De Trappenberg"
Crailloseweg 116
1272 EX Huizen, Nederland

Spain

Pilar Such Acin
ASPACE
Apartado 55
20.080 San Sebastian, Spain

United Kingdom

Blissymbolics Communication Resource Centre (UK)
Thomas House, S.G.I.H.E.,
Cyncoed Centre, Cyncoed Road
Cardiff CF2 6YD, U.K.

CATHY FAIRLEY

The Paraphrase is written for those who are moving into traditional orthography. It offers an independent reading opportunity for the growing reader. The Paraphrase is written by Cathy Fairley, former consultant, Easter Seal Communication Institute.

Me at a Sheltered Workshop?

By Mary Ann Merchen

I wanted a communication aid. I went to an agency to see if they would pay for it. I had to prove that it would make me able to work.

I had to have a job evaluation. It was done at a workshop for the retarded. I have cerebral palsy, but I am not retarded. I didn't think it would be useful at all. But it was very helpful.

My counsellor made me feel that he really wanted to help me. He wanted to help me find a job that was right for me. When he tested me, he told me how I was doing. He expected me to do well. The job they gave me to do was to watch others working. The things I saw helped the staff decide how well the workers were doing.

The people at the workshop didn't know I had a lot of education. (I have my B.A. in psychology.) They talked down to me. I had to learn to deal with that. It helped my self control.

I got to respect the workers. They took pride in their work. They were friendly to me. Now my ideas about the retarded and people with other handicaps are changed.

The job did not continue. They did not think my work was useful enough to keep paying me, but it gave me more confidence.

To Readers of Paraphrase

Mary Ann Merchen's original article appeared in *Communicating Together* Volume 7, Number 1, March, 1989.



Mary Ann Merchen

The Blissymbolics System of Communication in Poland

ANNA LECHOWICZ

Anna Lechowicz is a Blissymbol affiliate in Poland. She attended the European Affiliate Meeting in Belgium last March, and gave this report of the development of her program in Poland. She is currently Director of a special school and is involved in translating Blissymbols into Polish.

In Poland, we are absolute beginners in the field of augmentative communication. Two years ago we knew nothing about Bliss. Now there are nearly fifty persons who communicate by using Blissymbols. Like small children who start to walk, we are very enthusiastic about our achievement. At the same time we realize painfully how much we still have to learn. Though I haven't any important new experiences to share with you, I thought you might be interested to learn how Blissymbolics came to Poland, and what is the present state of our work.

To understand better what I'm going to tell you, try to imagine the time when, in your homeland, authorities began to realize and to accept that children with cerebral palsy were able to learn and should be sent to school. In Poland, this happened only five or six years ago, but to this day, only a small percentage of these children attend schools or kindergartens.

In 1983, the teaching of cerebral palsied children in small groups of six to eight started in Warsaw on a half private basis. Two years later, the first public primary school for children with severe motor handicaps began. In Poland, as in most countries all over the world, the initiative of the parents was responsible for this development. As a result of their perseverance, positive action was finally taken by the local school authorities, and work began — on a very small scale. I was asked to be the director of this small school for twenty-one chil-

dren, and was entrusted with organizing it. At that time, no relevant books in the Polish language existed, and it wasn't possible for us to go abroad to see schools at work and to discuss with, and learn from experienced persons. Instead, members of the staff and I visited institutions such as sanatoria, children's hospitals, and kindergartens where, along with others, children with severe motor handicaps were being treated, and we received help and advice from them.

Every day taught us a bit more about how best to work with the children at our school. Their eyes, showing deep confidence, and their smiling faces encouraged us. But our greatest problem was that of communicating with the children who were not able to speak.

Opening of a Door

Help with this problem came very unexpectedly from outside. Was it good luck, or a mere coincidence? Or should I say it was 'the opening of a door' regarding my future work?

Quäker-Hilfe in West Germany had collaborated with the National Committee for the Assistance of Motor Handicapped Children in Poland — the association of the parents of cerebral palsied children — from the very beginning in 1983.

One day Quäker-Hilfe invited me to visit Hamburg for one week. Together with a teacher at the kindergarten for cerebral palsied children in Poznan, I had the opportunity to visit Schule Hirtenweg in Hamburg and other special schools for motor handicapped children. We were struck by the many technical aids in use there, absolutely unknown to us. But still more impressive was the delightful atmosphere of contact, of mutual understanding, helping one another, and working together. And we made one big discovery at Hirtenweg School; nonspeaking children were communicating with their teachers and their classmates by pointing to Blissymbols. Wonderful! The simplicity of the Blissymbolics system and the many possibilities it offers for various users impressed us deeply. This was exactly what we needed at our school in Warsaw, and at many other institutions in Poland.

By the way, Blissymbols were also a fine help for me personally. At that time, I didn't speak or understand any foreign language. I stayed at Olga Carsten's home, a teacher at Hirtenweg school, and since she knew the Blissymbolics system, very soon the two of us started to use Blissymbols to help with our somewhat difficult com-



Anna Lechowicz (left) of Poland with her friend Olga Carsten from Hamburg, West Germany.

munication. In those days, my "Bliss madness" began, and it has continued until today. I felt strongly that Blissymbolics must be introduced to Poland, too.

Three months later, in May, 1987, both Alicja from Poznan and I attended a Bliss training seminar in Bonn, West Germany. Our thanks go to the generous help of the Bundesverband für spastisch Gelähmte u.a. Körperbehinderts, Düsseldorf, and once more to Quäker-Hilfe. All was arranged in such a short time. On this trip, we came in contact with Hermann Frey, the West German BCI affiliate, and during the farewell dinner we began to speak a little about the possibility of organizing a Bliss training seminar in Warsaw.

Getting Started

On our return to Poland, teaching the Blissymbolics Communication method was officially started in the kindergarten for cerebral palsied children in Poznan and in the small school in Warsaw. Krystyna Ziatek, psychologist at this school, and I together drew up the teaching program for Kasia, one of our students. She was then eight years old, and she did not speak at all. Kasia had very little contact with others at school. She hardly ever smiled, and only opened up a little to her form mistress. For several reasons we

decided the psychologist who had regular lessons with Kasia should be her Bliss teacher, too.

After the general ideas of Blissymbolics had been explained to the girl, and she was given her first symbols, Kasia soon realized what a help they could be to her. She greatly enjoyed each Bliss lesson, and after a short while a smile came to her face. We observed that now Kasia tried to articulate the words connected with the symbols on her display. She also showed a new interest in language by asking for the precise meaning of words her teacher had just used. When the girl had learned 'to speak' full sentences using Blissymbols, the staff at school recognized that Blissymbolics can fit even a Slavic language like Polish. There had been strong doubts about this in the beginning.

The positive results of the work with Kasia encouraged me that now was the time to plan a Bliss training seminar in Poland. One important step on the way was to convince the Ministry of Education in Poland about the value of the Blissymbolics

Communication System. Only when this communication system was accepted within the ministry as one of the possible approaches towards helping and teaching nonspeaking cerebral palsied children at school, were doors open for 'Bliss' in our country. The Parents' National Committee for the Assistance of Motor Handicapped Children and the Institute of Teachers' Post-graduate Education in Warsaw together took responsibility for running a Blissymbol workshop in Warsaw, and, to our great joy, Adelheid Benning and Hermann Frey from Düsseldorf, West Germany, agreed to come to Poland as instructors. From the first to the last day Olga from Hamburg helped us with all our work sparing neither time nor effort. The seminar was fully subscribed with thirty-five participants attending. They were specially chosen to represent many different towns and various professions. We hope they will now help to spread information about the system of Blissymbolics all over the country.

After the seminar, a group of interested persons agreed that a small Bliss centre was needed in Warsaw to continue the work for 'Bliss' in Poland, and to keep contact with the newly trained Bliss teachers. Secondly, they felt that now the time had come to get in touch with Blissymbolics Communication International in Canada. This I did, and in December last year an Affiliate Agreement with BCI was signed in Warsaw. Thus, 1988 brought full official acceptance of Blissymbolics in Poland. I feel this is also the occasion to give the sincere thanks of all Bliss teachers and Bliss users in Poland to the many helpful persons, organizations and schools in West Germany, in Canada, in France, and in our own country. Without their help the development I described would have been absolutely impossible, especially in such a short time. □

This section of
Communicating Together
is sponsored by
Pilot Club International,
Ontario District.

COMMUNICATION OUTLOOK

Communication Outlook is an international quarterly offering a multi-disciplinary source of information on the latest products, and research & development in augmentative and alternative communication.

*To receive a sample issue, overview and subscription form, fill out this form and send it to: **Communication Outlook, Artificial Language Laboratory, 405 Computer Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1042.***

please send a sample issue and subscription form to:

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP/POSTAL CODE _____
COUNTRY _____

Blissymbols and the Institution

ALAIN JACOBÉUS



Alain Jacobéus is a speech pathologist at the institution L'Ecole-Clinique in Belgium. In this article he outlines some concerns he has about ongoing support available to Blissymbol users in institutions. This article was originally presented at the European Affiliate meeting in Belgium in March, 1989 and has been translated from the original French.

This article reflects the experience with Blissymbolics in a certain type of institution in a particular region of Belgium. The region, Charleroi, is an ancient industrial site currently undergoing a great deal of change, with a socio-economical-cultural context which is difficult and relatively poor.

The institution "L'Ecole-Clinique Provinciale", is both a school and a hospital. It serves the physically handicapped from two months to twenty-one years of age. In a population of 350 residents, many have cerebral palsy, and the number of multihandicapped is increasing.

"The joys and sorrows of Blissymbolics" could be the subtitle of this article which reflects my feelings after several years of using the system. The happiness comes from the accomplishments of Bertrand. He is minimally quadriplegic and also mentally disabled with a measured IQ of about 36. He is, however, fairly self sufficient in many ways: he can walk, manipu-

late objects, eat on his own. He communicates through a few stereotyped words, sounds and gestures.

Tests of oral language level told us nothing. So, as an experiment, we tried introducing Blissymbolics to this student who wanted so much to communicate.

The first weeks, indeed the first months, were not very encouraging. He did not seem to pay attention to the symbols we presented to him. The experiment was inconclusive and I thought of giving up. After all, he had an IQ of only 36!

The First Success

Then, after a vacation, he seemed happy to see me again. I was the only person to listen to him, to try to understand him, to try to expand his communication without making fun of him. I think, too, the "friendship" which united us pushed me to try once more. His mother told me about what he had done on his vacation and I found her account full of information to investigate in lessons with him. The results appeared to be significant, so I persevered.

Spontaneously, he came back and drew a few symbols which he had already seen. Ten times, twenty times, he told me about the same event, relating the smallest details. I tried to understand him and I encouraged him to give more details. He was happy, and constantly called out to me.

I continued discussing the subject of his vacation with him, and his mother kept me informed about his weekend and holiday activities.

We chatted. We had a lot of fun, and insidiously, I introduced new symbols, to illustrate our conversations better. He continued to use his stereotyped words, his sounds, his gestures, but he referred equally to the symbols which I "understood" better! We always stayed with the concrete, pictographic symbols; that was my intention from the start.

Then, one Monday, he arrived in tears! The week-end had probably been fun and he was sad to leave his family. I tried to console him,

and once more, taking advantage of the opportunity, I introduced a new symbol: crying. If this did not have the effect of consoling him, it caught his attention, and left a mark. For him, this related to something intensely important.

The following sessions were exciting! Spontaneously, he returned to this symbol of crying. Ten times, twenty times, fifty times, he told me that the previous day, the day before that, the previous week...he cried. This symbol, which he never confused, nor had any trouble finding on other symbol boards, had particularly intense meaning for him. His cognitive disability did not limit him to concrete pictographs only, he was able to make associations and take the intellectual step which permitted him to reach to ideographs! Following that, other ideographic symbols were understood, acquired and remembered. These symbols, these concepts represented something of importance in his life, with an emotional content which was evident and strong.

Other symbols introduced to him were music, the record player, the pool, the bathing suit — that is to say, things that meant a lot to him.

Some Observations

This experience raised questions for me. For a few of them I was able to find answers. From others, I drew some conclusions, while still others inspired additional reflection.

The teaching was done solely through "mechanical" methods. If certain prerequisites are necessary to teach Bliss successfully, the most important are a good relationship, and atmosphere! If with some clients, Blissymbolics can be "taught" in the pedagogical sense of the term, with others who are less able, it will be learned in the social sense of the term, in the way a child learns to speak his mother tongue, that is to say, on the basis of a close and warm relationship, marked by great mutual respect on the part of the two participants. This, together with lots of positive encouragement, like a spontaneous

exchange between a mother and her child, provide the best environment for successful teaching. It is always with a certain skepticism that I note that some teaching is conducted in an artificial manner. This may result from lack of experience in general or lack of understanding of the limited experience of students in an institutional setting.

As well, we must be careful! We must beware of hasty judgements from IQ tests that really do not say anything. What is important is the subject's motivation in a close relationship at a given moment. The notion of time in this type of learning is only relative and the performance should be without ridicule.

Nevertheless (to return to the case of Bertrand): in spite of the cooperation of his parents; in spite of the numerous explanations; in spite of the functional, transportable symbol display; in spite of the potentially large vocabulary; in spite of a series of favorable factors; the institution staff has not succeeded with the system. They probably tried, but to

my great regret they never really persevered.

In effect, after several years and a lot of experience, we never created, at the institution, genuine "Bliss users" blooming in their communication, in their everyday lives, within their surroundings.

Even so, we are still full of enthusiasm and eager to "spread the good news". By small gatherings with each service and organization, we have attempted to come closer to the sensibilities and objectives of each individual. We have also arranged meetings of a more academic nature. The institution has many visitors and the system of Blissymbolics is frequently accorded special attention.

Nevertheless, in our immediate setting, the system has not really been accepted. It is likely that it is poorly used and inadequately interpreted to the parents and the children who must feel themselves set apart by it. What sort of reactions have occurred? From complete lack of understanding to ridicule to being refused pure and simple.

Some of the reasons people refuse to use it reveal a lot of misunderstanding:

"That seem complicated, I prefer my own personal pictograms."

"That is for the handicapped."

"If they can understand Bliss, they can learn to read, that is better."

"The symbol displays are lost, the posters ruined."

The speaking partner is frequently intolerant and impatient, he does not make the effort to listen. Did we have too high hopes for this system, and did we not expect results too quickly?

At our institution only the speech pathologists have had training in Bliss. There are no Bliss classes. Is Blissymbolics really a full-fledged alternative method of communication? Is it the hoped for method? Is it really a "communication prosthesis"? These are the questions or reflections that I leave to you to think about, but questions for which we have not yet found any suitable answers. □

Single Switch Software

• Join The Circus!

This exciting program takes place in the center ring with single switch input controlling the action. Three circus acts feature a juggling team, a magician, and a lion tamer! Four fun levels of play are available.

Special features have been placed in this program, such as a green light on the screen providing a visual signal to hit the switch, auditory cueing, and action delay for children who need some time to refocus attention to the monitor.

*Other entertaining titles in our single switch software line include **Learn To Scan**, **Make It Happen**, and **Make It In Time**. All have variable parameters and colorful graphics. Discover the fun!*

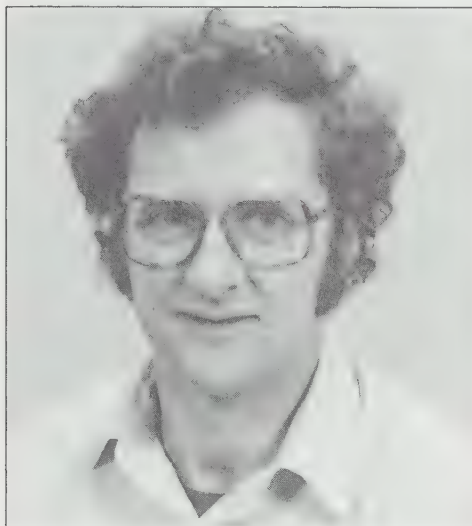
 don johnston
**developmental
equipment, inc.**

p.o. box 639
1000 n. rand rd., bldg. 115
wauconda, illinois 60084
312•526•2682



Closing the Acquisition Versus Composition Theme

GEB VERBURG



"Research and Publications" is written by Geb Verburg, who has been involved in the field of nonspeech communication since the mid-seventies. A cognitive scientist, Mr. Verburg is currently working as a research associate in several projects at the Hugh MacMillan Medical Centre, Toronto.

In the last three issues I have addressed what I perceive to be the biggest problem of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), namely: the symbol user's inability to add symbols to his or her symbol board or computer vocabulary independently. I have discussed alternative ways of helping users acquire symbols, I have criticized existing methods of vocabulary selection and prescription, and I have suggested a few ways in which we can create more opportunities for the user to share more fully in this richly developmental activity, that is, the acquisition of language and of knowledge of the world.

In this the last of this series on vocabulary acquisition by the user versus vocabulary composition by the facilitator (and the user), I want to mention briefly a potential high tech solution to the independent acquisition of symbols. I also want to excerpt from a recent article by

Katherine Nelson, one of the doyennes of developmental psychology, renowned for her work in language learning and categorization.

Vocabulary Growth: Higher Tech Methods

The medium that will give unprecedented power to information consumers of all levels of ability is CD-ROM or optical disks when used interactively. In one of the "projects in gestation" at the HMMC we are working with a publisher, a computer manufacturer, and a software company to put some geography textbooks (maps, graphics, videos, literature) on CD-ROM disk. Even the relatively simple retrieval methods that I have observed so far have led me to believe that these media are enormously well suited to teach simulated (virtual) mobility and actual communication skills to persons who are severely physically disabled and nonspeaking.

The high speed with which large bodies of text, maps and (soon) video footage can be interrogated and displayed, together with the increasing ability to carry information back and forth between media and applications, and the option to 'hide' multiple meanings and messages behind symbols, words, and pictures makes CD-ROM the ideal keep-up/catch-up technology. There are, of course, some fantastic challenges hidden in this application of multisensory technology.

First, the general challenge is how one organizes and interlinks graphic, video, text, and voice or music in such a way that the user is still in control and can work with all these types of information. Secondly, how can this be implemented when the user does not read orthography but uses Blissymbolics or another graphic or pictorial system? A technical question here is how a computer can search through specific pictures or icons efficiently. How can large numbers of graphics be best organized for fast and easy retrieval? The system features of Blissymbolics may take on special significance as we apply this new technology.

At the moment CD-ROM is still considered more a mass-memory storage device than a high powered resource-based instructional material. It can bring many physically unattainable objects within multi-sensory reach of students who are severely disabled. Until this technology is available, the AAC user will depend upon us to implement as many independence enhancing tools and tricks as we can dream up. Other things we can do already are: become familiar with the technology, and, more importantly, find out when to use what kind of intervention with nonspeaking children. In this latter pursuit I found Katherine Nelson's article very helpful.

Constraints on Word Learning?

This is the title of Nelson's article which appeared in *Cognitive Development* (1988). All page references that follow are to this article. The author addresses the question "How do children first learn to say words and learn to use them to express meaning?" (p. 221). She identifies three general approaches to this question: (1) cognitive prerequisite, (2) social support, and (3) linguistic constraint position (p. 221). In a nutshell these three positions differ in what they see as the origins of word learning or lexical development.

The cognitive prerequisite position, often associated with Piaget, insists that children should have a certain level of cognitive development before words can be acquired. Kangas and Lloyd (1988) reviewed these prerequisites recently in the December issue of the *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* journal. In the social support approach, identified with Vygotsky and Bruner, language serves as a symbol system that affords the social integration of children and adults. Finally the linguistic constraints position holds that there are certain innate rules or structures built into the human brain which regulate or allow language to develop as it does. Nelson reviews research pertaining to each of these positions

and concludes that none of the three quite captures the process of lexical development. Instead she postulates a combination of the child's desire to make sense of the world and the need and mechanisms of social convergence as the prime movers of word learning.

Although Nelson's article and all research reviewed in it is based on able-bodied and speaking children I will expand upon some of the observations and conclusions presented by Nelson. I believe that the regularities of normal development may help us understand the process of acquiring symbols by nonspeaking persons. The first observation of interest is the postulation of three distinct periods in the course of lexical development.

The first period, which lasts for six to twelve months, begins when "the child first becomes sensitive to language forms and begins to respond to them consistently" (p. 223). Please note the phrase 'and begins to respond to them consistently'; the language learner must be able to respond even at this very early stage. In this first developmental period "children are learning what words do".

When the child knows and can actively produce thirty or more words the second period begins. The "naming explosion" falls in this period. "The second period may last several years, as basic knowledge of words and related conceptual distinctions are built up".

The third period of lexical development begins in the early preschool years (three to four years) and serves to revise, reorganize, and consolidate (p. 225) the words learned. Nelson observes that all these developmental periods are different and may require different approaches to the acquisition of words and their meanings.

I would imagine that these periods may very well be present in nonspeaking persons too. And each period has its own peculiar obstacles for nonspeaking and physically impaired persons. Period one requires that we identify when a child/person is sensitized to words. How do you find this out when the person does not speak? Through observation and little tests in which you use words/symbols and offer these to the child. The other burning need of this period is for the child

to be able "to respond". This series of articles was really about ways in which we may enhance children's ability to respond and choose their words and hence their knowledge.

In the second period the central question is: How can a severely physically disabled person indicate things he or she wants named? And how can nonspeaking children themselves name things? The low tech solutions proposed in the previous column (*Communicating Together*, Volume 7 No. 2, June, 1989) may help here.

And finally, in the third period, how can a person revise and reorganise words/symbols and their meanings if he or she has no way to remove and replace a symbol on the symbol board or computer with a more appropriate one? My previous column began to address this topic.

These periods are compiled on the basis of research and experience with able bodied students, and I believe they are a useful guide to what we should strive for in the homes and classrooms of nonspeaking children. These three periods constitute one of the best global models of AAC intervention that I have seen. I think that we need to examine seriously how these developmental stages can help us to support nonspeaking children in their independent (as possible) mastery of communication tools.

How, then, do children learn words?

Not, according to Nelson, by having adults point to a thing and utter the name for the thing at the same time. This is not really how children learn words. They learn many words in the second period, but mainly because now it is the child who does the pointing!

In the earliest period, adult naming of objects that have no "functional importance or interest" (p. 240) for the child are not learned. However words for objects that afford involvement on the part of the child or afford interesting interactions are acquired.

Our task is to learn to observe the children for evidence of stage I or II or III behaviour, but more reliable than our observation are the children's own choices and investments. Our challenge therefore is still to give children ways to

initiate, choose, express what they want and are ready to communicate, and to allow them to follow their interests actively.

I want to conclude with a long quotation that may be obvious to most of you but that neatly covers all bases. Word learning involves: "(a) a child interacting with the world of people and things and attempting to make sense of it, forming representations of events and concepts of objects; (b) parents, siblings and other adults interacting with the child linguistically and non-linguistically in a variety of contexts, including play and caretaking, focussed on the child or on people and activities; and (c) within these varied contexts, words being used that have conventional meanings in the parent language, children being introduced to them in situations where their use is appropriate and their reference often thereby transparent" (p. 241).

A child is an active learner, but not necessarily physically active. To learn, a child must be able to be actively and personally involved: that is make decisions, choices, rejections, acceptances, commitments, mistakes, victories; accept defeats, blunders and praise; and learn to deal with frustrations. If this can be our attitude, if Nelson's developmental stages can be our model, and if we can add a little technology and a lot of new thinking, then the biggest problem of AAC (i.e. the symbol users' dependence on their facilitators and symbol providers) can be solved, in my opinion, to the great benefit of the users and their families and friends. □

References

- Kangas, Kathleen A. and Lloyd, Lyle L. (1988). "Early Cognitive Skills as Prerequisites to Augmentative and Alternative Communication Use: What are we waiting for?" *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* Vol. 4(4) pp.211-221.
- Nelson, Katherine (1988). "Constraints on Word Learning?" *Cognitive Development* Vol. 3(3), pp.221-246.

Pen Pals Wanted

We have had two recent requests for Pen Pals. If anyone is interested, respond to either of the contact names below:

Penrose Pen Pals

The Augmentative Communication Program at the Capron Rehabilitation Institute at Penrose Hospital is sponsoring the "Penrose Pen Pals". The primary purpose of "Penrose Pen Pals" is social: to help our augmentative communication users develop long distance friends. For some of our participants, it may have other side benefits as well: giving opportunities to practice using communication devices or computers, to practice typing, spelling, reading and computer literacy skills.

Anyone of any age can be a "Penrose Pen Pal" — the only requirement is that you like to receive mail, and that you use some type of writing device other than a pen or pencil to write your letters.

If you are interested in receiving names of prospective pen pals, please enclose \$1.00, and mail it along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, to the following address:
Penrose Pen Pals
c/o Kay Askida
Capron Rehab —
Penrose Hospital
P.O. Box 7021
Colorado Springs, CO 80933

Blissymbol Pen Pal for Finland

We received word from Finland of a young man, Jani Virtanen, who would like to exchange letters in Blissymbols with someone from North America. Jani is thirteen years old and is in Grade seven in school. If you would like to become his pen pal, or if you know a Blissymbol user who would like to correspond with him, write to:

Ann Marie Getgood
Kivalakotikyla
SF - 37500 Lempaala
Finland

Shirley McNaughton Travel Scholarship Announced

In conjunction with the reception on May 17th, 1989 honouring Shirley McNaughton's investiture into the Order of Canada, and her retirement from administrative responsibilities with Easter Seal Communication Institute, a scholarship fund was established. Many friends and colleagues from all parts of North America and Europe contributed generously, providing a solid financial beginning for the scholarship.

The Award

The Shirley McNaughton Scholarship will be awarded to assist a consumer attend a conference focussing on augmentative communication. The BCI Board of Directors will appoint a scholarship committee with international representation. This committee will select a conference at least biennially for which the scholarship will apply, and administer the selection process.

The first scholarship will be awarded next year, to an augmentative communicator attending the Fourth International ISAAC Conference on Augmentative and Alternative Communication in Stockholm, Sweden August 12-16, 1990. The value of the scholarship will be \$1,000.00.

Eligibility

Applications are invited worldwide from users of any form of augmentative communication, who are 18 years of age or over, and who have submitted a paper for presentation at the conference. The winning candidate must have had his or her paper accepted.

To apply, candidates are invited to write a letter of application outlining how they feel they can contribute to the conference and what benefit they feel they will gain from going. A copy of the abstract of the paper submitted should be attached, as well as a budget of anticipated expenses for the trip, and an indication of how expenses not covered by the scholarship will be met.

Deadline for submission of the application is February 1, 1990.

Announcement of the scholarship winner will be made soon after BCI has been notified as to which applicants have had their papers selected.

Applications should be mailed to:
Katherine Seybold
Administrative Coordinator
Blissymbolics Communication International
250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 200
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 3P2

Have You Moved?

Please remember to let us know your new address. If possible send an address label from a past issue.

Mail to:

Communicating Together
250 Ferrand Drive,
Don Mills, Ontario, Canada
M3C 3P2

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

ESCI Special Interest Seminars

In Toronto, Ontario

The Easter Seal Communication Institute (ESCI) holds a series of seminars throughout the year on a variety of topics related to the application of augmentative communication.

Seminars planned for the fall:

- Basic Sign Language for use with Augmentative Communicators. A six week evening course on Mondays beginning September 18th.
- Programming for an Augmentative Communicator in the Classroom — Elementary Students
Friday, September 29, 1989.
- Blissymbol Elementary Workshop (3 day seminar)
Monday, October 23 - Wednesday, October 25, 1989.
- Selecting Graphics for Communication Boards (2 day seminar)
Monday, November 6 and Tuesday, November 7, 1989.
- Getting Started with Bliss
Wednesday, November 8, 1989.
- Programming for an Augmentative Communicator in the Classroom — Pre-Schoolers (2 day seminar)
Friday, November 17, 1989 with follow-up Friday, February 9, 1990.

For further information contact:
Training Coordinator
Easter Seal Communication Institute,
250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 200,
Don Mills, Ontario M3C 3P2
Telephone: (416) 421-8377, ext. 2205

Augmentative and Alternative Communication and Seating, Positioning and Mobility

State of the Art Conference

In West Lafayette, Indiana

- September 24-26, 1989
This conference is sponsored jointly by the midwest regional RESNA and ISAAC and will be held at Purdue University.
Contact: John M. Wellman, Division of Conferences, 116 Stewart Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907 USA.

Southeast Augmentative Communication Conference

In Birmingham, Alabama

- October 20-21, 1989
Guest Speaker: Linda Burkhart
Contact: Pamela Elder, Coordinator, United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham, 2430 11th Avenue N., Birmingham, AL 35234
Telephone: (205) 251-0165

Technology for Everyone Conference

In Chatham, Ontario

- October 11, 12, 1989
Wheels Inn Hotel — for all persons dedicated to meeting needs of individuals with handicapping conditions. Emphasis will be placed on augmentative communication.
Contact: Paul McPhail, Southwestern Regional Centre, P.O. Box 1000, Blenheim, Ontario N0P 1A0
Telephone: (519) 676-5431, ext. 2264

Closing The Gap Seventh Annual Conference

In Minneapolis, Minnesota

- October 26-28, 1989
Microcomputer Technology for Special Education and Rehabilitation
October 24-25 Pre-conference Workshops
Contact: Closing the Gap, P.O. Box 68, Henderson, Minnesota 56044 U.S.A.
Telephone: (612) 248-3294

Touch the Future Southeast Regional Conference on Assistive Technology Practices and Applications in Education

In Atlanta

- November 1-3, 1989
Contact: Joy Kniskern, Rehabilitation Services, Room 706, 878 Peachtree Street N.E., Atlanta, GA 30309
Telephone: (409) 894-6744

1989 Annual Convention ASHA

In St. Louis, Missouri

- November 17-20, 1989
Contact: ASHA, 10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852
Telephone: (301) 897-5700

Technology Reaching Children

In Calgary, Alberta

- November 16-18, 1989
Sponsored by Technical Resource Centre
Guest presenter: Eydie Sloane, Director, Dade County Exceptional Technology Lab, Miami, Florida
Contact: Michael Saya, Conference Chairman, Technical Resource Centre, 200, 1201 5th Street S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2R 0Y6
Telephone: (403) 262-9445

Fourth International ISAAC Conference

In Stockholm, Sweden

- August 12-16, 1990
Contact: The Institute for Integration, Norrmalmstorg, 114 46 Stockholm, Sweden

Blissymbolics Communication International Elementary Workshop

In Calgary, Alberta

- January 24-26, 1990
Contact: Loretta Biasutti, BVM Associates, 34 Grafton Crescent S.W., Calgary, Alberta T3E 4X1

Helping Your Clients Speak Their Minds

Words Strategy — Another Minspeak™ Application Program From Prentke Romich Company

Until recently, for most cognitively intact communication aid users, the only way to communicate quickly was with general purpose sentences. A sentence strategy vocabulary certainly worked well for general purpose ideas. However, to say something specific (which was the need most of the time) a user had to resort to spelling, and spelling proved to be just too slow.

What was needed was a way for users to fully express themselves at a rate much faster than spelling. Words Strategy accomplishes that.

Words Strategy is a customized vocabulary for Prentke Romich Company's Touch Talker and Light Talker. It lets your clients communicate with the precision that was once achievable only by spelling but with 1/3 to 1/4 the effort. This combination of speed and content results in more effective communication.

Words Strategy Offers:

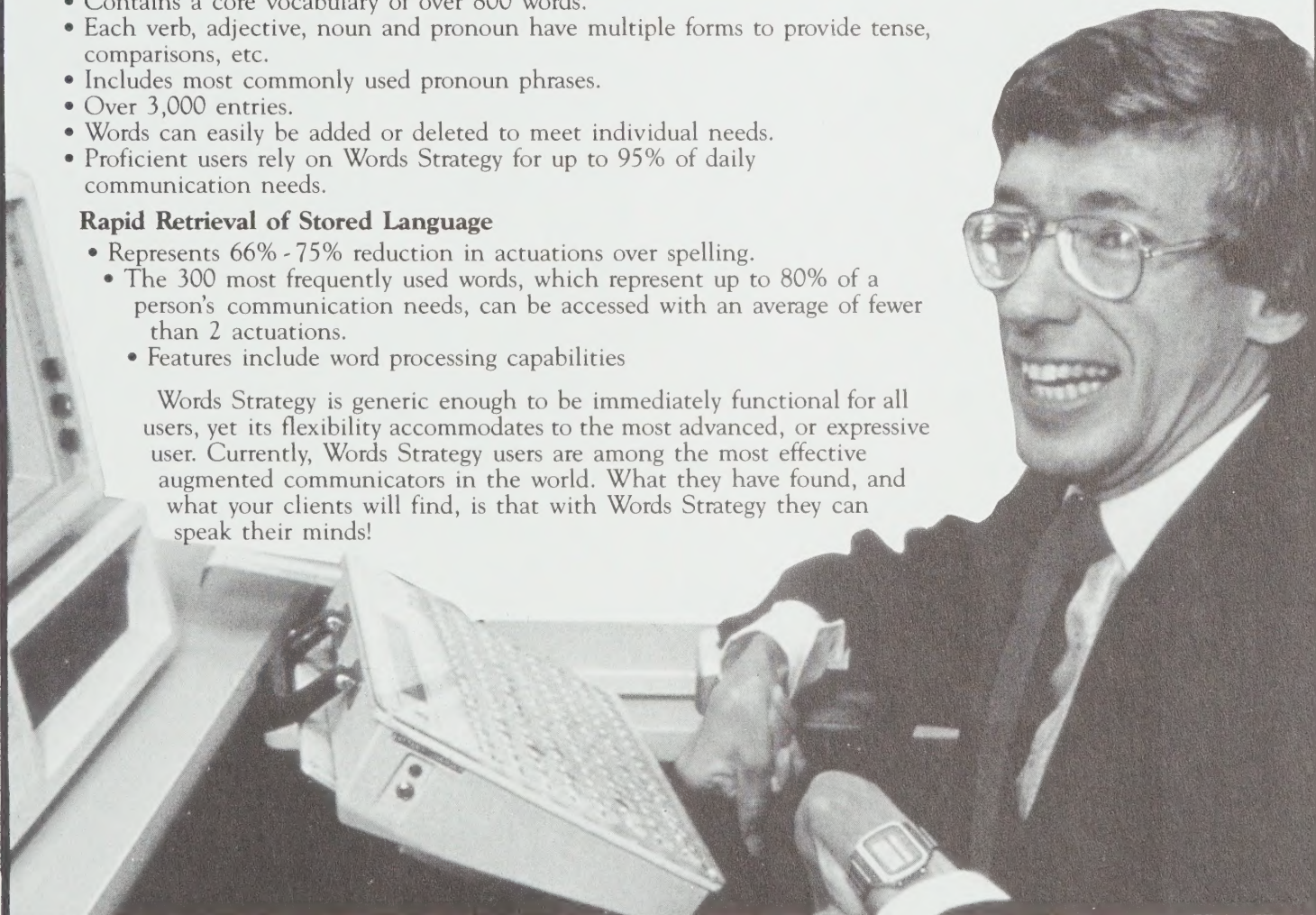
Flexibility of Expression

- Contains a core vocabulary of over 800 words.
- Each verb, adjective, noun and pronoun have multiple forms to provide tense, comparisons, etc.
- Includes most commonly used pronoun phrases.
- Over 3,000 entries.
- Words can easily be added or deleted to meet individual needs.
- Proficient users rely on Words Strategy for up to 95% of daily communication needs.

Rapid Retrieval of Stored Language

- Represents 66% - 75% reduction in actuations over spelling.
- The 300 most frequently used words, which represent up to 80% of a person's communication needs, can be accessed with an average of fewer than 2 actuations.
- Features include word processing capabilities

Words Strategy is generic enough to be immediately functional for all users, yet its flexibility accommodates to the most advanced, or expressive user. Currently, Words Strategy users are among the most effective augmented communicators in the world. What they have found, and what your clients will find, is that with Words Strategy they can speak their minds!



For further information, please contact your local PRC consultant, or contact us for the name of the consultant in your area.

WP36C



Prentke Romich Company

1022 Heyl Road • Wooster, Ohio 44691
(216) 262-1984 or 1-800-642-8255
FAX (216) 263-4829

CANADA: Betacom Systems
for Disabled People
723 Halpern
Dorval, Quebec
Canada H9T 1G5
(514) 636-9267

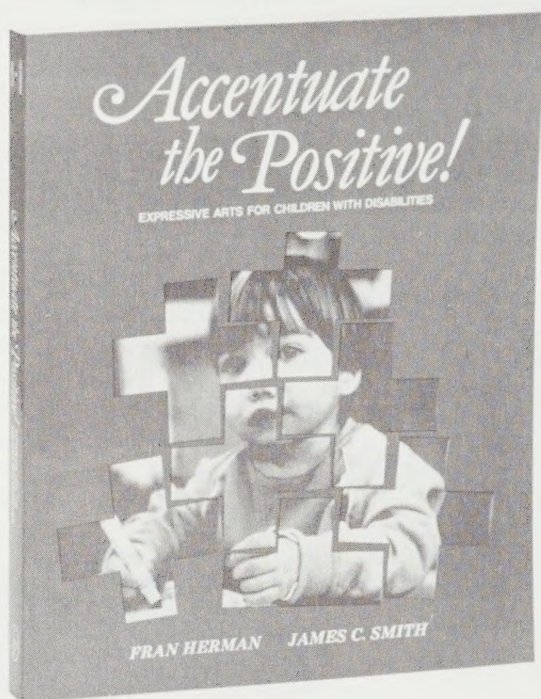
UNITED KINGDOM: Liberator, Ltd.

Whitegates
Swinstead, Lincolnshire NG33 4PA
United Kingdom
In UK: Corby Glen (0776 84) 391

New Products Available from



EASTER SEAL COMMUNICATION INSTITUTE



"Accentuate the Positive" by Fran Herman and James C. Smith.

A valuable resource text demonstrating the use of the arts in the remedial education of exceptional children.

Includes projects, music, plays and other practical aids and applications for parents, teachers, therapists and other professionals.

"Accentuate the Positive"

Price \$25.00 + shipping/handling

"Getting to Know Each Other"

Produced by the Board of Education for the City of Hamilton.

This video was filmed at Linden Park School in Hamilton and illustrates the successful integration of eight exceptional students into that school. The children, eleven to fifteen years old have limited speech but had been in a total communication program for several years and employed Signed English and Blissymbolics. The move to Linden provided the opportunity to use their communication skills with "mainstream" children. (11 mins./colour)

Price \$25.00

VHS Format

To order either of the above items, call or write:

Easter Seal Communication Institute

250 Ferrand Drive, Don Mills, Ontario M3C 3P2

Telephone: (416) 421-8377 ext. 2205

We now accept payment by VISA.